

Marielle Lipton

ISA Cusco

End of Program Report

Studying abroad was one of the most amazing experiences that I have ever had. Before I decided to go abroad, I was already worried about my financial situation, as my parents did not support my decision to study out of the country, but after receiving this award, they saw that I had the support from West Chester University to go, and so they ended up being very supportive thanks to this award! It was also a great help that the study abroad scholarship aided me in paying my tuition for my education abroad!

Over the summer, I studied in Cusco, Peru for five weeks. Some of the most incredible things that I did while in the ancient capital of the Incan Empire were seeing the ruins of Machu Picchu, jumping into Lake Titicaca (the highest navigable, and most beautiful, lake in the world), and holding a sloth at the Tipón zoo! In between all my adventures, I attended classes that not only expanded my Spanish-speaking abilities, but also my mind. Because the teachers were all from different countries than myself, they introduced new ways of thinking that I had never been exposed to before and that I have adapted into my own ways of thinking.

In addition to learning about the history of the Incan civilization and Peruvian culture, I also wanted to find out more about myself. It was integral to go abroad in order to do that because while I was there I was not surrounded by people that I knew, people that already had expectations of how I should act. When I was abroad, no one knew who I was so I could choose how to act without the weight of those expectations on me. During the trip, I learned that I am way more confident, assertive, and outgoing than I thought I was, and that I'm way more adventurous, too. I was not afraid to try new things or to take risks, and I have definitely brought

all of these qualities back with me to the US. About the world, I learned that there are countries that do not have as much as the US in terms of material possessions, but they are way happier than the majority of people here. Happiness is a lifestyle, not something that you can measure with the number of things that you have. It also has a great deal more to do with the people that you have in your life and the experiences that you have with them. While my study abroad experience only lasted for 5 weeks, I will carry what I learned with me for the rest of my life.